

Lions raise repair funds for rustic Camp Currie



DAVE OLSON/The Columbian

Sean Guard, right, of the Camas Lions Club, discusses repairs to the J.D. Currie Youth Camp with camp caretaker Dick Golladay. The club is raising money to replace the lodge's roof and fix the chimney.

By JUSTIN CARINCI
Columbian staff writer

CAMAS — In the three decades since Sean Guard camped there, the J.D. Currie Youth Camp hasn't changed much. It's the only thing along Lacamas Lake that hasn't, Guard said.

"You'd be amazed how many adults come in who went here and just can't believe it's (still) here," Guard said.

Once beyond the city, the camp now is hidden among luxury homes and golf greens.

Guard, with the Camas

GRASS roots

Lions Club, hopes to stir up a few memories and dollars from old campers to save the camp's lodge. The grand wood structure — an open ground floor

with sleeping lofts — needs a new roof and chimney repairs.

The club wants to raise around \$10,000 for the effort. Since fall, the Lions have raised almost a quarter of that amount, Guard said.

In an area where homes sell for \$1 million, Camp Currie is more than old-

Camp Currie Fund Drive:

■ **WHO:** Camas Lions Club.

■ **WHAT:** The club is raising money to fix the lodge at J.D. Currie Youth Camp, on Lacamas Lake.

■ **CONTACT:** Sean Guard at 360-834-2533; or Dick Golladay at 360-834-3384.

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Sean Guard, left, and Dick Golladay walk the grounds of Camp Currie. They Currie Creek wends through the camp into Lacamas Lake.

Currie:

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fashioned. Campers still pay \$1 each to stay there, said camp caretaker Dick Golladay — but even that amount is voluntary.

One hand pump pulls all the camp's water.

"But that's OK," Guard said, smiling, "other than times when it would be nice to power-wash stuff."

The campers don't seem to mind the rustic touch. Once school lets out, the day camp slots fill quickly, Golladay said. About 5,000 children stay there every year.

Without video games or television, campers hike in the 300-plus acres of county property above the camp, enjoy the lake alongside kingfishers and raptors or watch skits on the rustic stage.

The early days

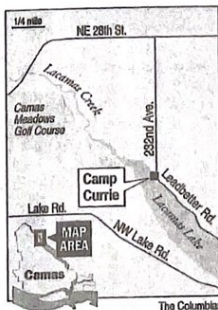
That's just the vision Camas attorney J.D. Currie had in the early 1940s, when he took his son and his son's friends to experience the elements at the site.

"He was hoping to make it a camp, eventually," said former camp board member Virginia Warren.

Currie convinced the Crown Zellerbach (now Georgia-Pacific) mill owners to let him start a Boy Ranger camp along the lake, said Warren, the camp's historian and scrapbook keeper.

Currie continued to support the camp, which grew to become a Boy Scout and later all-youth camp, even after his son and his friends died of meningitis.

The mill owners leased the property to the camp — which campers named J.D. Currie Youth Camp in Currie's honor — for \$1 per year,



Warren said. They donated bricks from the mill site and a huge log for the lodge's siding.

Warren tells of the effort to build the lodge, sometime in the late 1940s.

"They took one of the big logs, cut it up into sections and, with two old Model T's, hauled them out to use for

shakes for the lodge."

The lodge has stood ever since, one of the few structures on the camp's 28 acres.

Rustic upgrades

The camp modernizes slowly and carefully. About 12 years ago, Camp Currie added three rustic adirondack sleeping shelters, which leave one side open.

That they were built in a day doesn't take away from the shelters' solid construction, said Guard, who remembers the frenzied effort.

"We built the snot out of these when we built them," he said, "because we didn't want to ever have to deal with them again."

Even with newer shelters, many campers still sleep in tents or mere sleeping bags beneath the stars.

"Sometimes in the summer, you have 300 Girl Scouts out

there at the same time," Warren said.

But given Northwest winters, a roof can come in handy.

"The adirondacks are probably the most wonderful thing that has happened," Warren said. "Even if it's cold and raining, they can sleep out there."

That relative luxury won't include heating blankets. Only the lodge has electricity — upgraded only last year from one plug-in, Golladay said.

The Lions Club wants to keep the lodge working. If there's money left over, Guard said, then they can begin thinking of more adirondacks or another cooking site.

But nothing that would have surprised J.D. Currie.

"We want it as primitive as we can," Warren said. "The kids are supposed to rough it when they go out there."